

#### REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication in the Office Action of allowable subject matter in claim 5.

Claims 1-14 have been cancelled in favor of new claims 15-24, which better define the subject matter Applicant regards as the invention. Support for the features recited in new claims 15-24 is provided in the original claims and the specification on page 6, lines 2-7.

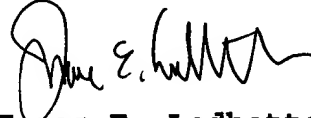
Claims 1-4 and 6-14 were rejected, under 35 USC §103(a), as being unpatentable over Nakamura et al. (US 2002/0094836) in view of Yano et al. (US 5,559,790).

Nakamura has an effective date of February 8, 2002, and the present application has a U.S. filing date of May 31, 2001. The filing date of September 22, 1999 of Nakamura's parent application PCT/JP99/05183 cannot be relied upon under 35 USC 102(e). See MPEP 706.02(f)(1). Since the filing date of the present application antedates the effective date of Nakamura, Nakamura is disqualified as a reference against the present application. Therefore, allowance of claims 15-24 is warranted.

In view of the above, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

If any issues remain which may best be resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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